

## **Commandant to Reinforce Standards and Core Values in Visits to Marine Bases**

General Michael W. Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps will address Marine officers and enlisted men and women in a series of events inside and outside the U.S. over the next several weeks.

The purpose of his visits will be to reinforce the ideals, values and standards for which Marines have been known for more than 200 years. Reflecting his personal concern over recent serious allegations about actions of Marines in combat, the Commandant's remarks will focus on the value and meaning of honor, courage, and commitment and how these core values are epitomized by most Marines in their day-to-day actions – both in and out of combat.

A full biography and high resolution image of General Michael W. Hagee can be found at: [www.marines.mil/cmc/33cmc.nsf/cmcmmain](http://www.marines.mil/cmc/33cmc.nsf/cmcmmain)

### **“On Marine Virtue” By Gen. M. W. Hagee**

Recent serious allegations concerning actions of Marines in combat have caused me concern. They should cause you to be concerned as well. To ensure we continue to live up to General Lejeune's description of a Marine as someone who demonstrates “all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue,” I would like to review the importance of our core values.

As Marines, you are taught from your earliest days in the Corps about our core values of honor, courage and commitment. These values are part of and belong to all Marines, regardless of MOS, grade, or gender. They guide us in all that we do; whether in combat, in garrison, or on leave or liberty.

To a Marine, honor is more than just honesty; it means having uncompromising personal integrity and being accountable for all actions. To most Marines, the most difficult part of courage is not the raw physical courage that we have seen so often on today's battlefield. It is rather the moral courage to do the “right thing” in the face of danger or pressure from other Marines. Finally, commitment is that focus on caring for one another and upholding the great ideals of our Corps and Country.

The nature of this war with its ruthless enemies, and its complex and dangerous battlefield will continue to challenge us in the commitment to our core values. We must be

strong and help one another to measure up. The war will also test our commitment to our belief in the rule of law.

We have all been educated in the Law of Armed Conflict. We continue to reinforce that training, even when deployed to combat zones. We do not employ force just for the sake of employing force. We use lethal force only when justified, proportional and, most importantly, lawful. We follow the laws and regulations, Geneva Convention and Rules of Engagement. This is the American way of war. We must regulate force and violence, we only damage property that must be damaged, and we protect the non-combatants we find on the battlefield.

When engaged in combat, particularly in the kind of counterinsurgency operations we're involved in now, we have to be doubly on guard. Many of our Marines have been involved in life or death combat or have witnessed the loss of their fellow Marines, and the effects of these events can be numbing. There is the risk of becoming indifferent to the loss of a human life, as well as bringing dishonor upon ourselves. Leaders of all grades need to reinforce continually that Marines care for one another and do what is right.

The large majority of Marines today perform magnificently on and off the battlefield. I am very proud of the bravery, dedication, honor, courage and commitment you clearly display every day. And America is proud as well. Americans, indeed most people around the world, recognize that Marines are men and women of the highest caliber – physically, mentally, and morally.

Each one of you contributes in your own unique way to our important mission; I am proud of your dedication and accomplishments. Even after 38 years, I still stand with pride every time I hear the Marines Hymn. The words of that Hymn mean something special to me. Especially, "Keep our Honor Clean". I know that means something to all of you as well. As Marines we have an obligation to past Marines, fellow Marines, future Marines and ourselves to do our very best to live up to these words.

As your Commandant, I charge all Marines to carry on our proud legacy by demonstrating our values in everything you do – on duty and off; in combat or in garrison. Semper Fidelis.

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